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THE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN GEOGRAPHERS.

AN ADDRESS BY W. M. DAVIS AT THE FIRST MEETING OF THE
ASSOCIATION IN PHILADELPHIA, DECEMBER 29, 1904.

The segregation of specialists into societies of national membership, but of limited scope, has been a noticeable feature of scientific development among us in the last ten or twenty years. The profitable results are apparent to all who have attended the many successful meetings that the various societies have held; the unprofitable results have been little discussed. While on the whole the latter are not of great importance, they certainly deserve consideration when it is proposed to form yet another society of specialists. The chief of them are: the interference with other interests caused by the multiplication of meetings devoted to single sciences, the narrowing influence of withdrawal from more general discussions, and the cost of yet another annual fee. These considerations have not been overlooked by those who have decided to form an Association of American Geographers; their decision was taken because it was felt that, as far as the above considerations are concerned, much more would be gained than would be lost by establishing such an association. But there are other difficulties attending our particular case. Geography as a subject of mature study has little recognition in this country. Most of those who give their mature years to its cultivation devote their efforts to such of its elements as can be apprehended by young pupils. Most of the other mature students of geography are also occupied with associated sciences, such as geology, biology, or history. Indeed, geography broadens greatly as it matures, and some critics fear that it lacks the coherence essential to a science that is to hold a society together. It is not to be denied that this is a serious embarrassment; yet even when the other difficulties are added thereto, they do not outweigh the advantages that it is hoped and believed may be gained by organization; and it is particularly to the means of reaching these advantages that I wish to devote a few minutes of our first meeting.

In the first place, we may fairly hope, from the success that has already attended the efforts of the Committee on Organization, to bring together a large majority of the investigating geographers of

the United States—indeed, of North America. If we are really successful in thus associating the students of the organic and inorganic sides, the human, economic, zoological, botanical, climatic, oceanographic, and geologic sides of geography, and in leading them to work in view of and in co-operation with each other, and to present their results in each other's presence, we shall have taken an important step in the development of geographical science; for it cannot be doubted that students on the different sides of our subject have as a rule lived too far apart. If we can bring them together, we shall do much towards establishing a higher standard for mature geography, by making a better knowledge of its many sides essential.

While we propose limitation of membership to those who have done original work in some branch of geography, it is not the wish of the organizing committee to make our meetings exclusive, but rather to welcome to them all interested persons, and particularly those who by further work hope to take membership with us. The encouragement that we may give to these younger students to persevere in the cultivation of truly geographical science will, I trust, not be the least useful duty of our Association.

In both of these efforts we wish to occupy as truly a national position as any of the other national scientific societies—such as the Geological Society of America, or the American Physical Society. We shall have no fixed home; no limitations as to residence of members or officers, or as to place or time of meetings. At the same time we wish to establish the most cordial relations with all American geographical societies. We shall respect the pronounced individuality of the existing societies and promote the developing initiative of new ones. We shall hope to gain close acquaintance with them, not only by inviting their more active investigators to take membership in our Association, but also by asking their hospitality from time to time in allowing us to meet in their rooms. We do not propose to enter into competition with the existing societies in the way of publication. Most naturally, therefore, we wish geographical societies to increase in number and strength all over the country. While our membership must remain comparatively small—we may not reach a hundred for some time to come—nothing will give us more satisfaction than to see the more popular membership in the general geographical societies roll up to many thousands.

Our activities will not be limited to meetings for reading papers indoors. We hope not only to hold field meetings in the open

season, but also to do our utmost in promoting geographical investigation and geographical progress of all kinds. There is plenty of work to be done. It goes without saying, however, that members and officers alike will have to give time and thought and effort if significant results of these kinds are to be reached. In my own judgment, our success will be measured chiefly by the amount of geographical activity that comes to be associated with our meetings. The reading of papers is one indication of such activity; but it is not the only one, and perhaps not the most important one.

In the midst of great diversity of interests, and of active competition with societies in other subjects, there are, on the one hand, evident difficulties before us. We hope, on the other hand, to bring prominently forward the geographical element in all our work here presented, in order to strengthen the bond that draws us together; and we must, if possible, arrange the time and place of our meetings so that the other interests of many of our members shall not suffer. The Council of the Association will ask the best suggestions of all members toward these ends.

We have one great encouragement. A year ago we were only an imaginary quantity. Now we have taken form; we have already an enviable list of members, a good programme for our first meeting, and a representative, if not a large attendance. A great opportunity for useful work is before us; we have only to press forward to reach it. Let us press forward together!

CIRQUES: A REVIEW.

BY

ROBERT MARSHALL BROWN.

Description: Cirques have been described as crescent-shaped hollows or half-cauldrons on the sides of mountains (Geikie, A., 1887, 157), as large spaces excavated from the solid rock, bounded on three sides by an almost cylindrical steep mountain wall, and with a tolerably flat floor (Helland, 1877, 161); armchair-like recesses in mountain sides (Richter, 1900, 103).

The essentials are the steep sloping sides, the embayment in a mountain slope, the exit facing the valley, with a sill generally above the level of the floor of the cirque, and the sharply-cut remnants of mountains where cirques have been numerous, shading to the more normal form of mountains in unglaciated regions where this feature has been less common. The variations of cirques